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A HARVESTING

To

M. Dexter Forman

in friendship

for

his sheep

Nov: 1924.

By the same author

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œ A HARVESTING œ

By
EDEN PHILLPOTTS

Author of
Pixies' Plot ; Cherry-stones ;
The Treasures of Typhon
&c.

LONDON
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UPB

A HARVESTING

*Where, briefer than the flower, the budding foam
Blooms in a rainbow, while the billows sweep
Upon a patient shore, I sometimes roam
And mark the trash they bring and fling, to heap
The mottled sand with all one tide can reap.*

*Harvest of little worth, yet lacking not
A tale of men, the fragments hither wend :
Things that his hands have touched, now flung to rot,
Their voyages and values at an end.
Yet, to the beach, a human note they lend.*

*Even so the litter of my trifling rhymes,
From shores 'twixt ebb and flow of thought and dream,
Through loneliness of still and sleepless times,
May justify themselves and so redeem
Their setting down, when brother man's the theme*

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TO MY MOTHER (1843-1921)

As a pure stream, whose silver-bright caress
Quickens her thirsty brink, your way you went,
One tireless purpose and one sole content:
To find the folk unloved and cheer and bless
Such as had only heard of human happiness.

When blindness fell—no pang of personal woe
Could dim your vision for another's pain,
Your tender quest and sure response restrain,
Or bate the toil that you would undergo
Compassion swift to bring and gentle ruth bestow.

Now stilled the generous heart that never beat
For self in all your length of fruitful years;
And shut the eyes that shed not many tears
For your own sorrows; stopped the ready feet
That on a thousand roads your mercy made so fleet.

I was your first-born son and me you bore
To share through half a century of time
Your gracious days, to see your hope sublime,
Rejoicing that a widowed love of yore
Had fashioned me a part of you for evermore.

Mother, you win your meed of human praise
For righteous souls who wrought and now are gone;
Unto Faith's Household add a precious one
And, in the after-glow of your good days,
Lift up some patient hearts still beating on their ways.

MOONLIGHT

BESIDE my bed a moonbeam falls
To lift and glide along the walls
And write with lucent hand.
Sometimes the message I receive;
At other times I disbelieve,
Or cannot understand.

How hard it is to tell again
For songless man one white refrain
Of moony reveries;
But when the speaking silver broods
In mystic redes and holy moods,
All hope of telling dies.

Oh, poets worthy of the name,
Wherein whose souls the authentic flame
Burns clear as sun at noon,
Your spirits and your casements lift,
For only yours the unearthly gift
To understand the moon.

EVOLUTION

As in the monkey's musing eye
There broods a sort of muddy guess
Upon the brink of consciousness,
Our human vision may descry;

So will the rare, transfigured face
Of man, or woman, when it gleams
With selfless thought, or saintly dreams,
Shadow a first, proleptic trace

And harbinger of those to be:
Who, in a nobler pattern wrought
Through aeons of creative thought,
Smile back on us with sympathy.

THE GUARDIAN ANGELS

Two Guardian Angels met at a church door.
The charge of one had given to the poor
And entered in to pray.

“ My man is safe—a righteous soul and wise,”
His Angel said; “ but, Brother, in your eyes
I read a dark dismay ? ”

“ My man is safe as yours—of noble heart
And lofty spirit; all too soon we part,”
The first replied in sorrow.

“ He is a Hussite; with his latest breath
He'll praise the One True God and welcome death:
Your man burns mine to-morrow.”

HER VESTURE

Now Mother Earth throws off her robe of day,
The green and gold and rainbows, and the light
Of kerning corn, and fruit, and rivers bright
That thread their glittering braids through all her glad
array.

The purple of her hills she casts aside;
The glow of field and fallow, heath and glen;
The forest glories and the flow'r-lit fen;
The beaches, where her seas spread their blue margent
wide.

She doffs the day and in a garment dim,
Wrought of the dusk and owl-light, rests and dreams
And dwindles in the darkness, while small streams
Tell her about themselves and make a twilight hymn.

Smaller she grows and nearer, dearer—one
Who marks even me and knows me for her own.
Her state and pomp and splendour gone—alone
The quiet Mother now, and I her very son.

A warp and woof of mists and moonbeams creep
With their own gift down night's deserted aisles;
Until the dewy, drowsy Mother smiles
And, in their silver gown, cuddles herself to sleep.

A MILKMAID'S SONG

I

ANOTHER morn doth paint the skye
A Dew pearle is on the grasse;
A blessed lark sings up on high
To see the black night passe.
With blushes red the rivers wind
Along a rosie plain
And silver trouts leap up to find
Their morning meate again
Hark ! Hark ! The cocks doe crow;
Up ! Up ! Ye merrie men;
And vixen steals away unto
Her little cubbies' den.

II

Blue smoake is curling thro' the vale;
Come the sweet-breathing kine
Where down I set a milking paile
To rub my mistie eyen.
But now the Sun, with jolie mirth
Doth gladden all the land
And brings another day to birth
From God Almighty's Hand.
Hark ! Hark ! The cocks doe crow ;
Up ! Up ! Ye merrie men;
And vixen steals away unto
Her little cubbies' den.

OWL AND I

AT noon of night, amid great, dreaming trees
Swept with the glory of a summer moon,
There stole a radiant, inner sense of boon
Rained to me from their reverend mysteries.

For here no shade of consciousness could cloud
The dim, sweet soul of pure, unconscious things
Borne to percipient heart on silent wings,
Aloof from man, consummate, stainless, proud.

Humanity was sleeping far away;
No taint of mind had drifted here, to slight
The passionless perfection of the night;
No voice to mar, no footstep to betray.

The world well found without him, said my soul,
Emptied of him, all innocent, even as now,
Wrapped with her silver dew beneath the bough,
In virgin sleep—immaculate and whole.

Then came the owl, with hollow laugh: ‘Hoo ! Hoo !’
Like a brown moth he glode into a tree
And perched and cried a question unto me:
“No human here ? What, then, my friend, are you ?”

“ Who shall be found that is of woman born,
Although he pray in Nature’s holiest place,
But brings himself, his weakness and disgrace,
His woes and wrongs and knowledge and self-scorn ? ”

“ Wise bird,” said I; “ but there’s another thought:
That, lacking faulty man and his poor sense,
This magic wold and forest and immense
Vision of moonlit mother earth are nought.”

RONDEAU

AUTUMN kindles once again
Glowing with the ancient glory;
Over hill and vale and plain
Burns the sempiternal story,
Till, when life and light depart,
Last leaf falls and splendour dwindles
Face we winter with brave heart
Autumn kindles.

MINIATURES

I

THE actor sat upon my "Chesterfield";
Felt by his chair; the ground would nothing yield;
Looked slightly blank, with baffled consciousness:
Habit had made him seek his "b. and s."

II

I took some friends to see my garden plot.
The saxifrages were a sorry lot.
Most feigned they nothing saw; Brown, with a grin,
Stood still and stared—to rub the failure in.

III

A monkey bears a babe at dead of night;
And for her young the cage of monkeys fight.
The keeper found her, broken and bereft,
Hugging one little paw—all that was left.

IV

She wore her mother's brooch the day she wed,
And pricked a finger. "Damn the brooch," she said.
At her own wedding, twenty years before,
Her mother also pricked her hand and swore.

V

A jackdaw found a scrap of something good,
 And flew away; but, grudging him the food,
 A herring gull shot down and squealed and fought,
 Then in mid-air the falling morsel caught

VI

Who blame the herring gull's aerial ways,
 While thinking upon these, our doubtful days ?
 For *homo sapiens*, learning how to fly,
 Was quick to foul with crime the virgin sky.

VII

Has he a brain of mud and front of brass,
 Mind of a billy-goat and hoof of ass—
 That dire, official, Anglo-Saxon fellow
 Who banned the master, Luigi Pirandello ?

VIII

God bless the virtuous Mayor of Godalming,
 Who blocked the villains of a building ring.
 "Touch not," said he, "these green and bosky vales;
 For ever sacred to our nightingales."

IX

A heron rose, flapped down the wind,
 And left one silver plume behind;
 A dainty pen with which to bless
 The joys of solitariness.

X

Blue berries and bright yellow leaves she brought,
 And so her artist lover's studio sought.
 "Purple and gold—oh, lovely dream," he sighed;
 "And real sloe gin is lovelier still !" she cried.

XI

"The moon, Maria, is in eclipse," said I.
 Our aged one peered up suspiciously.
 "I wouldn't be surprised at no strange sights:
 Her's looked uncommon queer for several nights."

XII

The vague of dusk, with dim and starry sleight,
 Bade fern-owl purr and trimmed the glow-worm's light;
 Wakened a hedge-pig; summoned up a snail,
 Like goblin ship the lonely dew to sail.

XIII

The years roll breaking, bruising, wearing down,
 As waves upon a precipice's frown;
 But neither life nor death may peace bestow,
 For, when the breath is out, we nothing know.

THE MASTERS

THOUGHTS, like the rainbow wings of cherubim,
Or tongues of flame, flashed leaping round about
His work, while yet it grew to meet his need;
The fire-bright triumph itself was but a dim
And dwarfen child of all that glow and rout
Creation meant to him, who did the magic deed.

The masterpiece, that others held supreme,
And loved with reverent wonder, he who wrought
Knew but a fruit of finite hand and mind,
Shrunk from the unclouded splendour of his dream,
Belittled by his medium near to nought—
As when a bubble bursts and leaves one drop behind.

For still the gleams ineffable unfold
Where our lone mightiest brave immensity,
Finding no pang too great, no grief in vain;
Still starry beacons, brands of burning gold,
Blaze for the master spirits from on high,
To show them miracles they may not show again.

TO THOMAS HARDY

To wisdom, truth and beauty dedicate
With vision clear as cloudless break of day,
You mark man on his immemorial way
Rousing old echoes down the aisles of fate;
Unwearied yet, the mystery meditate;
Decipher motive, balance and survey;
Reveal the invincible predestinate
Austerely silent touching 'Yea' and 'Nay.'
O steadfast master, now your pilgrimage
Lights a new constellation on our sky,
A starry wonder and a heritage
Immortal in its pure humanity:
Through life's frustrated hope and desolate truth
Shall ever shine the beacon of your ruth.

THE FIRST GIFT

A PALAEOLITH set forth to slay a bear
In olden time of Stone,
His ragged garment of a grey wolf's hair,
His speech a grunt, or groan.

An arrow barbed with flint soon swiftly flew
To bite the cave-bear's side;
The stone-man stabbed his snarling prey and slew
And spilled its red life tide.

His all the prize by every tribal law—
All his; yet at a thought
He gave another palaeolith one paw:
The miracle was wrought !

Only till now within a mother's eye
Had joy of giving burned:
Such fruitful part in human destiny
Was yet to be discerned.

And through the lodge, beneath a starry heaven,
The new-born wonder ran:
How that the bear slayer a gift had given
Unto his brother man.

The young revered the giver for a god
And shouted praise of him;
But the old, wise ones held the action odd—
A doubtful, dangerous whim.

Then he who had received, with all his might
Began to give again
Until the magic flashed, like morning light,
Through many a muddy brain.

PAIN

SWIFTLY a man forgets the brunt of pain,
And though it beat upon his tortured flesh
A thousand times, yet, when he feels it not
It sinks from out his thought.

Pain leaves a sterner stamp upon his face
Than on his memory; his patient heart
Leaps up to welcome health again with joy
Untouched by sense of wrong.

So every grief from which he stands restored
Fades swiftly off; and of his many pangs
Quickliest of all he will forget the last—
He lives not to forgive.

CLOUD PICTURES

AT noon, all weary ashes, the sky is one wan shade,
Till on its bosom flashes a flower many rayed.
In naked splendour turning, it opens on the blue
And soon the South is burning, where sunlight conquers
through.

The cumuli, in billows, with rounded heads and grey,
Still roll their rainy pillows to smother dying day.
Athwart the gloom advances, with fiery flight in vain,
A sheaf of crimson lances that break and leave no stain.

Above a winter gloaming, with sunset at the leas,
Rode golden galleons homing upon their purple seas;
And when all light was muted, and shone the after-glow,
Those fairy ships saluted before they sank below.

In vast and patterned order throng cirri round the moon,
To spread their fleecy border for Dian's silver shoon,
And through each cloudy wrinkle—red, blue, and violet—
Small stars peep out and twinkle, like fishes in a net.

A day's death still and tender at dusky edge of night
With one faint cloudlet slender, hung in the green owl-
light;
And through that peace abiding a rosy flash it flings
Then stoops, like seraph hiding his head beneath his wings.

THE CHILD

WHERE dusky doubt can violate
The pool of thought with leprous wing,
Both heart and spirit suppurate
Under the poison of her sting,
Till life's an open wound and death the welcome thing.

For he was dark and she was dark;
Their child a flaxen baby fair:
No shadow could the father mark
Of parenthood in that bright hair,
Or those grey, laughing eyes, within his claim to share.

But, while she swore the boy his own
And faithful she, there grew and crept
A bat-winged doubt that soon had flown
To where his dearest comrade slept,
And new-born hate arose old love to intercept.

By night, in secret agony,
He tosses on his lonely bed
And fights the fear, and lifts a cry
To him—the friend that war had sped—
And challenges with woe the unremembering dead.

There's none to hear his fruitless call;
The moonlight spills another patch
Of dribbling silver down the wall;
Night moults to grey; and still they scratch—
The vermin of his soul, that none shall ever catch.

OF TIME

THE year hath three hundred and sixty-five days,
And a man knows three hundred and sixty-five ways
To spend them;
But when to the last they're recorded and done,
Olympus and Hades can mar never one,
Or mend them.

FIRE-FACES

HE saw a martyr smile from the flame
Red to the bone with a lifted hand;
He saw a cat and he saw a brand
Like a fat old dame.

He saw a demon chained to a rock;
The head of a swan and the leaf of a tree;
He saw a mole and a monstrous flea
And a barnyard cock.

He saw a grave with a little stone;
Napoleon's head and a woman's breast;
A nigger's jowl and a blackbird's nest
And an empty throne.

Then smiled one shadowy face and grey
That stabbed to the nerve of a passion old
Beside the fire it grew very cold,
And he turned away.

AN APRIL SONG

A cuckoo's back on the Cuckoo Stone, the Cuckoo Stone, the Cuckoo Stone—

The catkins swing, the skylarks sing,
And Spring hath come to her own again.

A cuckoo's back on the Cuckoo Stone,

With love and life in daily strife,

Once more together thrown.

Cuckoo ! Cuckoo ! Cuckoo !

Come lads and lasses woo !

A cuckoo's back on the Cuckoo Stone, the Cuckoo Stone,
the Cuckoo Stone—

Jack turns to Jill, and Jane to Bill,

And Will to little Joan again.

A cuckoo's back on the Cuckoo Stone;

From peep of day to dimpsey grey

He chimes his monotone.

Cuckoo ! Cuckoo ! Cuckoo !

Come lads and lasses woo !

A cuckoo's back on the Cuckoo Stone, the Cuckoo Stone,
the Cuckoo Stone—

Oh, fairy bell, ring never knell

To tell that love hath flown again.

A cuckoo's back on the Cuckoo Stone:

Pray no heart meet, or spirit greet

His music with a moan.

Cuckoo ! Cuckoo ! Cuckoo !

Come lads and lasses woo !

THE BOON

FULL many a dim and dewy hour
I've watched inquiring twilight stray
To glimpse the treasures of the day,
When folds the leaf and shuts the flower.

But twilight never may surprise
The secrets of day-loving things :
At the first shadow of her wings
They hide their hearts and close their eyes.

Other the blossoms, moony white,
Or dim and pale that welcome dusk,
When sweet of hesperis and musk
Wave their small censers on the night.

O rare the boon that's given me,
To view what day may never view
And joys from darkness hidden too,
Sharing their mingled mystery.

SPRING MOSAICS

I

THE saxifrage of gold brings joy to thinking mind.
Her haunt in dingles old, where little rillets wind,
Enshrined
With dewy moschatel and glimmering moss,
You find.

II

Through mist and evening rain breaks orange sunseting;
From red elm top again the storm cocks welcome Spring
And sing.
With voices like cold chimes of crystal bells
They ring.

III

The frog with amber tights, patterned in ebony,
Now oftentimes delights to croak at dusk of day
And play,
Or seek with ruby eyes and ready tongue
For prey.

IV

That silky paddle-paw, the plump and shining mole,
Thrust up his snout and jaw, his little velvet poll,
And stole
One blink at the blue sky, then sank into
His hole.

Now in the dim 'tween light—the shadowy moth-time
still,
That is not day or night—grey churn owl spins at will
To fill
The dimpsey with his purr and drone and throb
And thrill.

LEPROSY

THE hooded leper's Lazarus bell
Makes mournful clangour down the street.
Folk run before him: to that knell
No answer comes save stir of fast retreating feet.

Yet un-belled lepers haunt us near,
Not guessed till, to a man's surprise,
Their festered tongues drip in his ear
And gleam the putrid souls behind their blinded eyes.

Sick bodies fright not this our day:
Great hearts still share the leper's lot;
But mightier those who force their way
Into the charnel house, where fellow spirits rot.

THE SEASONS

AWAKES the slumberer, where buxom earth
Stirs to the lifting sun and airy mirth
Of birds; away her coverlet she flings
To light and twinkle among buds and wings,
Roll like a wave and break in vernal foam
Through meadows where her new-born children roam.
Spring, in the likeness of a little child,
Discovers holt and fold and hidden nest;
Welcomes each innocent baby of the wild;
Weaves a white daisy-chain upon the breast
Of the young year; or lifts blue eyes that trace
The shrill lark's spiral into heaven's face.

Now burn the steadfast pulse and flame of life:
The Lord of Light hath taken earth to wife
And mated her in high and fiery noons
And loved her by the lamp of low red moons,
While silver-footed hours a vigil keep
And day scarce dies above their wedded sleep.
Summer, in semblance of a queen, may view
The fulness of her kingdoms all outspread.
Of light and purple shade and fleeting dew
Her royal robe is woven; on her head
Cloud-fire and sun-fire make a golden crown
Whence her sweet, rainy-scented hair pours down.

The garner's fill again; the heavy scent
Of perfect things in mellow sweetness blent
Now visibly along the sleepy air
Floats to the sky, then rolls and rises where,
Like to a jewelled censer, the ripe earth
Flings to the sun full savour of her worth.

Autumn—deep-bosomed mother—counts the gain,
Smiling alike where far-flung harvest glows
And where each little goblet of wild grain
Lifts for a blessing; solemnly she goes
Garbed with the rainbow glory of ripe fruit
In golden pomp to Pan's own passionate flute.

Sunk to hibernal, naked weariness
Again earth meets the riotous caress
Of all the winds; from out her drooping eyes
The light of seeing fades away and dies.
Then star-lit frosts with sudden swiftness still
Heartbeat of dene and dingle, vale and hill.

Winter ! O ancient nurse, come rock to sleep
The world again and bring great gift of rest.
Lower the light, where failing sunbeams creep
To kindle yon brief wonder of the west.
Draw the cloud curtains close and spread below
Our dreaming mother's coverlet of snow.

THE MONOLITH

UPON the mid-most deep and vast
Of moorland, far from haunt of man,
The wintry heather ridges ran
And rolled and rose and sank at last
To where a winding stream its sulky silver cast.

Fog brooded on that vision lone
And at my side, in habit grey—
Heaved there on a forgotten day—
Towered up one great, sad-coloured stone,
Whereon a hawk might rest, or breezes make their moan.

It hid the dust of vanished chief
And honoured in his lofty grave,
A neolithic warrior brave
Intombed 'mid pre-historic grief,
Or tyrant foe, whose death had won the lodge relief.

Gazing, I suddenly descried
The granite change; but all was still
Upon that far, sequestered hill;
Then, seeking swift the other side,
I marked if life were there, or what had strove to hide

All emptiness and nothing nigh;
Until again a something stirred
That was not man, nor beast, nor bird,
Yet moved and limned and seemed to sigh,
Blurring the monolith, so rugged and so high.

Then it was gone, and down I lay
Undoubting that some Stone Man's shade
An effort to appear had made,
But failed and lacked the spirit way
To show himself and pierce the light of that dim day.

Or, having heard my human tread,
And peered and longed, with shadowy pain,
To meet a living man again,
He felt a sudden, doubtful dread,
Seeing the quick may fright their kindred of the dead.

From pound and cirque and avenue
Of twilight boulders on the steep,
May old-time ghosts at even peep
The homeward husbandmen to view,
Best loving to consort where living folk are few ?

A PEEP SHOW

Scene I

WHIMSICAL WILLIE

HE was a glorious circus clown
Whose genius drew all London town;
But to far higher things he'd set
His steadfast heart, and hoped on yet.

Then, from a parish meeting, home
Unto his wife did Willie come,
And cried—the proud, exultant man—
“They've made me Vicar's warden, Ann !”

Scene II

THE DENTIST'S MECHANIC

IN youth he was a dreamer—often went
To fiery meetings, roared his discontent,
Cursed capital and took the darkest view
Of bourgeois people—meaning me and you.
He spoke in public, wrote a blood-red song,
And often cried, “How long, O Lord, how long ?”

Then love broke in on the recalcitrant;
Love beckoned with its old familiar chant;
Love—that undying individualist:
He dropped the Cause and wasn't even missed.
And now, with wife and twins, at Walton Heath
He thrives and makes the very best false teeth.

Scene III

THE SOCIETY

THE grey-beards wag, the bald heads nod
And gather thick as bees,
To talk electrons, gasses, God,
Old nebulæ, new fleas.
Each specialist, each dry-as-dust
And professorial oaf
Holds up his little bit of crust
And cries, "Behold the loaf!"

Scene IV

THE OLD MODEL

THE man who painted her is long since dead;
His masterpiece adorns the "Tate."
Now she herself is old, but soon or late
She comes, all wrinkled like a crushed-up paper,
Who was so tall and wonderful and taper,
To view again that lovely bust and head.

She peeps through her big spectacles each day
To see what time-less art discloses:
Her breast, a little poem of snow and roses,
Her neck, her hair, her heart-compelling eyes,
Bluer she thinks—far bluer—than modern skies;
Then gives a nod and goes upon her way.

Scene V

IN THE POLICE COURT

THEY tore each other's face and hair, like frantic
maenads fought;

Then, patched and plastered, raging still, together came
to court.

One held a baby in her arms; the plaintiff was unwed.
She told her tale: the magistrate took heed of all she said.

Then leapt the foe with flaming face to give each word the
lie,

But handed first her sleeping babe unto the enemy.

For men may thump and women scratch and next-door
neighbours brawl,

But babies grandly neutral are and take no sides at all.

Scene VI

THE WAY OF IT

HE brought the child a dog of long descent;
But when they met, the brute grew violent,
Bristled, and showed white teeth, with growl and hiss,
Because he gave the little girl a kiss.

His friend he brought to know his dearest friend,
Thinking the three must make a noble blend.
In six months' time they heart to heart agreed,
But found for him no further use, or need.

Scene VII

ALWAYS WITH US

IN old, golden time 'tis true
Gods were many, priests but few;
Are we better off a penny
Gods so few and priests so many?
When Jehovah goes to Zeus
Priests will practise still their use;
Still they'll buzz and swarm and thrive
Round about some brand-new hive.

Scene VIII

UNDER THE RAIN

THE rain beat down on every crown
Of the great wood wherein I stood
And, waiting till the storm had sped,
Upon a trunk inscription read.

The bark, long peeled, had truly healed,
But, grey and clear, still shadowed there,
The outline of a heart I trace
With "Jack" and "Jane" in its embrace.

Oh, Jack and Jane, may you remain
Yet close in heart, never to part,
As near, as dear, in love and soul,
As here upon the beechen bole.

Scene IX

THE RIGHTEOUS MOTHER

“**W**RETCH !” cried the mother to her infant son.
“ You hateful little boy, what have you done ?
Killed the white butterfly, of all dear things,
And then pulled off his tiny, fairy wings !
Oh, cruel child, to rob that living gem
Of love and life and beauty; for to them—
The butterflies—this garden is their home;
Here do they dance and kiss the flowers and roam
In happiness and plenty, even as you.
God would be very angry, if He knew !”
And while she spoke these salutary words,
Her hat displayed two withered humming birds.

Scene X

MISCALCULATION

DYING, he willed a modest cenotaph
Upon the wall within a village church,
Where he had lifted his mild soul in prayer
For half a century.

But no memorial stands to mark his name,
For he had given all that he possessed
To charity; and there was none on earth
To pay the twenty pounds.

Scene XI

THE MASTER BUILDER

BRAIN of putty, heart of gold, England, my England,
Just as in the days of old, England my own !
Nations all acclaim your worth, England, my England,
Mingling their applause with mirth, England, my own !
Empire builder, the world greets you, England, my
England,
But a six-roomed house beats you, England my own !

Scene XII

JOHNNY

THEY take poor, howling John to see
Great Bostock's famed menagerie,
Where, sorrow fled, his spirit feasts
Among the melancholy beasts.

Man wants but little here below
While kangaroos can heal his woe.
Oh, happy, well-remembered years,
When elephants could dry our tears.

Scene XIII

THE RICH OLD MAN

His angel stood beside the ancient's bed
And this is what he said:
"Oh, rich old man, behold the tangle of your thread !
Much hope of bliss you lost by accident of birth;
But count your money's worth
And mark the unholy mess that you have wrought on
earth.

"The ultimate reward we know is hard to win
If purple you're born in;
Though that's an accident that cannot count for sin;
But now you must confess, upon your dying oath,
Through folly, lust and sloth,
You've bungled Heaven and Earth and made the worst of
both."

Scene XIV

THE ROYSTERER

UPON the roundabout there rode,
All by himself, a man, whose load
Of years had numbered full four score;
But, thinking on the days of yore,
He took his pleasure gleefully
Without a care and fancy free.
A rose sat in his button-hole;
The "billy-cock" upon his poll
Displayed red dolls of silk and wire
That twinkled there like beads of fire.

While round and round the ancient sped—
All nose and chin and nodding head—
Behind two lovers sat together
Tickling him with a peacock's feather.
In front were children, side by side;
Beside him none appeared to ride;
Yet shadow grey there seemed to course
Upon the other wooden horse.
Then, lighting from his roundabout,
That old boy vanished in the rout.

Scene XV

THE MISSIONER

“**L**IFE,” said the missioner, “must be
A battle for eternity—
One end alone in view.
Your care and thought, from earliest breath,
Stern training for the day of death:
That's what you have to do.”

Old Sal, with beery laughter, heard
The good young fellow's earnest word,
And sniffed and spat and spoke :
“ If you've a got a tip to give,
Then tell us how the hell to live:
Any damn fool can croak.”

Scene XVI

MOTHER AND SON

SHE vowed the blessed fact of being mother,
To her most difficult but charming boy,
Atoned for all, though not a single other
Relationship could bring one shade of honest joy.

He, loving not the fount of his creation
And brooding on his fancied slights and stings,
Held the poor woman in no admiration,
But counted her among the disappointing things.

Scene XVII

EPITAPH

WHEN old Joe Endicott, the mason, died,
His master stood with us the grave beside.
A miracle, said he, to earth we give;
But on his stone these magic words shall live,
To be the wonder of succeeding ages:
“Here lies a bricklayer who earned his wages.”

Scene XVIII

AFTER THE FAIR

THEY jog along, jog home along
Beneath the setting sun;
While Jack fared ill and Joe did well,
Sam only went for fun—
Young Sam had all the fun—
But drunk or sober, sad or gay,
At noon of night all cats are grey:
In sleep they'll soon be one.

They jog along, jog home along
Beneath the setting sun;
And Smith is famous, Brown is rich,
But Jones he had the fun—
Old Jones had all the fun.
Yet saint or sinner, "yea" or "nay,"
At noon of night all cats are grey:
In sleep they'll soon be one.

CURTAIN

A SONG OF THE ROAD

SOME love the winding valley, where every turn's a joy,
And some delight to dally beside a river coy,
To hear, through dene and dingle, the laughing water's
call,
While sun and shadow mingle on foam and rock and fall.

Some haunt the pebbled reaches, and ever long to be
On lonely dunes and beaches beside the patient sea;
And others climb the mountains and dare eternal snow,
Where, green, the glacier fountains leap forth and head-
long go.

Some yearn for placid meadows and gentle daisied fields,
And some for leafy shadows, with all the woodland yields
Of mystery and fragrance among the friendly trees
That tempt a heart to vagrance amid their companies.

One tramps beside the milestones and proudly tells each
league;
Another thinks them vile stones, the symbols of fatigue.
He seeks the upland heather, where golden gladdy sings,
And yellow-eyed bell-wether a woolly music rings.

As red as any cherry flows by the sun-lit burn;
The blue is on the berry; the fox is in the fern.
At dawn the mists are droven like silver doves away;
By even-tide they're woven with roses in the grey.

Some tread the mighty highways with lust to elbow life;
Some only court the by-ways and shrink from stress or
strife;

One braves the savage antres, nor fears the drouths and
pains;

His humbler brother canters through homely nooks and
lanes.

Yet wheresoe'er we're going no foot hath ever trod;
'Tis virgin for our knowing in every stone and sod;
All ours the road to travel, by hill and vale, and shore;
Ours only to unravel, ours only to explore.

Or up or down it take us, and be it high or low,
To make us, or to break us, that way alone we go;
And win we venture glorious, or in the briars bleed,
For vanquished and victorious one way the road must lead.

Through wood and waste and clearing, by weather cursed
or blessed,

Each lonely road is nearing the self-same inn of rest.
Together after roaming all travellers shall be,
For every wanderer's homing, as river to the sea.

By goat path through the brambles, or sheep track on the
green,

Their sad or happy rambles assuredly convene;
And come they fresh, or haggard, there stands one house
of call,

And step they brisk, or laggard, one door's awaiting all.

One host alone is beckoning to each at set of sun;
But no man pays a reckoning where board and bed are one ;
And no man goes unfriended by them that hostel keep,
For when his journey's ended there's none too tired to
sleep.

THE PLAGUES

Now the wind is wide awake,
Sea to smite and earth to shake,
To belabour every farm,
Slay the good and breed the harm
With strokes of bale and wings of woe,
Where he rages to and fro.
Untimely and evil and fruitless the wrath of the tempest
That scattereth sorrow below.

Fiercely shines the unwinking sun
Every fiery day to run;
Cloudless still he beats and glares,
Recking not of human cares.
Still scorching life from dawn till eve
Robbing every harvest sheave.
Untimely and evil and fruitless Demeter's dark passion
That maketh poor heart of man grieve.

Falls and falls a stern grey rain
Misting dim on hill and plain,
Till, like blind but cruel eyes,
In the vales the waters rise,
Drowning the beasts and slaying seed
On each little croft and mead.
Untimely and evil and fruitless the flood on the fallow
That shouteth of hunger and need.

MARCH NIGHT

Now wheels the Hunter huge upon the West
And glittering sets, while overhead the wind
Roars with a riot, as though Orion blew
Upon the draggled earth.

The woodlands pant and cry into the dark,
Throbbing at each mad bluster from above,
That violates their nakedness and wrings
Their passionate litanies.

Some wail like women; some a resonant note
Reverberate on night, and at a lull,
Hissing they sink to silence and rebound
Against another stroke.

Dark heaves the earth against a clean-blown sky,
And deep in murk of water-meadows dim,
Beneath the shouting forest on the hill,
Move little beads of flame.

Under the spinney's edge a house on wheels
Lifts nigh the hurdles, and by lantern ray
Two veterans among the eaning ewes
Labour with patient craft.

Whimpering upon the wind there shrills the bleat
Of waking life, and deeper sigh ascends
From new-made mothers, while the ancient men
Help lambs into the world.

The starry flocks above trail on their way
Across the vast of heaven; and mother earth
Twinkles below at many a farm and fold,
Where shepherds tend their sheep.

DARTMOOR

Low are your little hills; narrow your vales;
No more than silver threads the streams that leap
From their moss cradles to the wide, green dales:

Yet in your ambit of the waste and steep,
Orbicular and perfect and austere,
You win fidelity, command and keep

Our trust. How many a rich and vanished year
Has seen my shadow flit upon your face
To glean the boon of patience and good cheer !

Beside a rillet on a day of grace
Full often have I sat and felt your heart
Beating beneath the granite, until space

Throbbled to the far horizons, where apart
Ranged your uplifted ramparts cloudily,
As though they waited but the wind to start

And sweep in a procession to the sea
With the round cumuli, so silver bright,
That rolled above them, huge and wild and free.

Prevenient, ever steadfast, day and night
Find you attuned to all that they can do;
Not storm may quell, nor bitterness affright

Your impassivity. The Seasons woo,
Or strike with passionate, fleeting fearfulness
Your unprotected bosom; but to you

Spring smiles behind each haggard winter's stress;
And though the lightning rend your granite crown,
And white hail flog, you know blue skies will bless

And sunshine heal the wounds that ache or drown.
Never comes doubt to shake your commonwealth
And unity; never a smile or frown;

Never a furtive tear, or sigh by stealth;
Nothing but patience and a purpose strong,
Endurance and a constant soul of health
Above all force to fret, or ill to wrong.

DECEMBER TWILIGHT

THOUGH sunset found the storm grown still,
The West a crown of liquid gold
Set on the forehead of the wold,
And hope of stars above the hill;

Yet stole, the patient eve to mar,
An earth-born fog that stifled all,
Drowned the pure twilight in a pall
And blotted hope of any star.

Close kin with the December days,
I know their hearts and mine they know:
Through rains of dawn and winter's blow
We travel our familiar ways.

And when, at even time, the sky
Awakens hope of stars still hid,
How oft upgathering mists forbid
Their light upon our destiny.

Let other days and other men
Welcome the dawn light overhead,
And know the blue and gold, and thread
The summer paths beyond our ken.

More glad and glorious they than we,
More swift of foot and apt to feel;
Yet something poorer for that steel
Your stern, grey passing shares with me.

THE TWO MOTHERS

I N days when I went roaming
My Mother's voice I'd hear,
With cadence small and clear,
Like bells across the sea,
Through many a foreign gloaming:
"My son, come back to me."

But now another's calling
And Mother Earth is she,
Behind the mystery
When life and work are done:
"Behold, the night is falling;
Come back to me, my son."

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